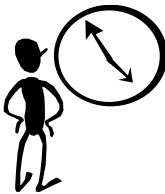


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Preach the Word

By Jefferson David Tant

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Timothy 4:1-4).

Paul’s admonition to the young preacher Timothy has just as much application today as it did 2,000 years ago. Paul warned that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...” It is quite obvious to all that that time did come. And that’s how we have some 42,000 different “Christian” denominations today, following after the creeds and doctrines of men rather than clinging to God’s Word, the New Testament.

Who likes to be “offensive?” I don’t know of any acquaintances who like to offend others, but if the Word of God offends others, we cannot keep our mouths shut and avoid speaking the Gospel truth.

Did Christ ever offend anyone by His teaching? Obviously, as we read in Matthew 5:12: *“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”*

Did the Apostle Paul ever offend anyone by his teaching? I guess that would explain why he was beaten and imprisoned from time to time.

I’m not saying that we should deliberately set out to offend by our preaching, but if preaching the truth through love for souls offends others, then so be it.

How do we explain the departure from Truth and the rise

of denominations that began a few centuries after the church's establishment in the First Century? Again, Paul's words to Timothy quoted above, that the time would come when they will not endure sound doctrine... and shall heap to themselves teachers..." Did that "time" come? Obviously so.

As we consider recent history, known as "The Restoration Movement," starting around 1800, it is interesting to note that within some 60 to 70 years, we have the beginning of the use of instrumental music in worship. This was one of the factors of the division that took place in the mid to late 1800s, resulting in the Christian Church and Churches of Christ. And using instruments in worship among Churches of Christ is happening again in the 21st Century. One example is the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas, where the preacher is Max Lucado, a well-known author. This 3,800-member church uses instrumental music in its worship. As the old expression says, "History repeats itself."

How did this happen? One factor may have been an attitude I have seen in recent years. One young preacher that I personally know said he could not preach against instrumental music in worship because the Bible didn't specifically condemn it. Oh, he would not be in favor of it but could not condemn it. Some might take that attitude and conclude that since the Bible doesn't condemn it, it must be OK. How could that young preacher ever convince someone it was wrong since he can't preach against it?

OK, let's continue that train of thought. Some time ago, I studied with and baptized a young woman who was a member of a denomination that used potato chips and Coke for the Lord's Supper. Does the Bible condemn that? Reading through the Bible at various times, I've never read where that's condemned. Would that be OK, then? I don't think so!

Most of my readers will be familiar with the expression in our courtrooms when a witness is called to testify. The witness is asked to promise to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." That phrase is believed to have initially been coined in Old English and became a staple of English trials by approximately the 13th century. It is used to swear in witnesses while giving evidence in court, emphasizing the absolute veracity of their statements. When witnesses testify, they solemnly declare: "I do solemnly and sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

This tradition traces back to Roman times, when legally binding oaths were emphasized, and perjurers faced severe consequences. The concept of truthfulness has persisted throughout history, even as the specific wording of the oath evolved.

We appreciate the need for the truth to be revealed in our civil court proceedings. But how much more vital is this concept in gospel preaching? Gospel preaching has two concerns, as Paul expressed to Titus: "*holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict*" (Titus 1:9).

Consider that the "whole truth" includes both that which is "for" and that which is "against," and the "against" would certainly include instrumental music in worship and potato chips and Coke for the Lord's Supper, etc.

Drink No Wine

By Steve A. Hamilton

Many people contend that the Bible does not condemn the drinking of an alcoholic beverage; rather, it condemns drunkenness. To them the drink is not wrong but the quantity of alcohol consumed. In truth, the Bible does condemn the drinking of fermented beverages.

The warnings against the consumption of alcohol are found throughout the Bible. A well-known passage in Proverbs 23:31-32 states *“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”* The command given here is not to desire any intoxicating drink! It is an admonition to abstain altogether from the use of wine. In order to avoid the harmful effects of alcohol Solomon tells those who wish to be wise (Prov. 20:1) to refrain from looking at it. Looking at it is the first step toward drinking it. This is not merely a prohibition of drunkenness, but an explicit admonition against even one drink of an alcoholic beverage. It is not only the abuse of alcohol that Solomon warns us about, but the **use** of it that is condemned! Wine itself is a mocker (Prov. 20:1), irrespective of the quantity consumed.

The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to live soberly! *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works**”* (Tit. 2:11-14). Christians are a people who deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The lust for an alcoholic drink is certainly the kind of thing that prevents sobriety. God wants a pure and special people. He doesn't want the kind of people that are indicative of worldliness; like those who drink alcoholic beverages.

A study of a few particular Greek words reveals that Christians are commanded not to drink alcohol.

The Greek word *nepho* literally means “drink no wine” (The Complete Biblical Library). Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words says it means “to be free from the influence of intoxicants.” The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says it is the opposite of intoxication. Liddell and Scott's Lexicon says it means “to be sober, to live soberly, especially to drink no wine.” Stephanus's Thesaurus says “he who abstains from wine.” Bretschneider defines it as “I am sober, I abstain from wine.” The Greek Dictionary of Byzantium says *nepho* means “one who does not drink wine.” The Greek-French Lexicon says “abstinence from wine, sobriety.” Robinson's New Testament Lexicon defines it as “to be sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine.” Younge's English and Greek Lexicon says it means “without wine.” Even Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries admit *nepho* means “to abstain from wine, keep sober.”

In a word, *nepho* means abstinence! However, some of the above sources are quick to point out that metaphorically *nepho* means to think soberly. The figurative meaning is derived from the fact that a non-intoxicated person is not mentally impaired. It is the figura-

tive and hence a more tolerant interpretation to the moderate use of alcohol that is preferred by many translators.

There is a different Greek word that is considered synonymous to *nepho* that literally means to think soberly. It is the Greek word *sophron* which literally means “sound mind.” It is the opposite of being under the influence of alcohol. It means to be in one’s right mind. It carries the idea of chastity.

The apostle Paul uses both *nepho* and *sophron* together in two passages (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 2:2). Obviously, these two words do not have the same meaning. *Nepho* places the emphasis on having a sound body where *sophron* places the emphasis on having a sound mind. Therefore, when we consider the qualifications for Eldership where these two words are found sequentially, Paul is telling us that an Elder must be someone who drinks no wine (*nepho*) and has an unaltered mind (*sophron*) unlike those who are given to alcoholic beverages.

Not only must an Elder be abstinent from alcoholic beverages, but he is not even to be near it according to the qualification, “not given to wine” (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). “The Greek is *mee-paroinon*: *mee*, a negative particle, not; *paroinon*, compounded of *para*, a preposition governing the genitive (of, from, on the part of), the dative (at, by, near, with), the accusative (together, with, to, towards, by near, at, next to); and *oinos*, wine. Literally, not at, by, near, or with wine. [emphasis mine] This looks considerably like total abstinence. It applies equally to private habits and public conduct. Notice the careful steps of the progress. He must be *neephalion*, [from Vigilant, vs. 2] abstinent, sober in body, that he may be *sophrona*, [from Sober, vs. 2] sound in mind, and that his influence may be unimpaired, *meeparoinon*, not with or near wine. We find in this passage no countenance for the moderate use of intoxicating wine, but the reverse, the obligation to abstain totally”.

Nepho can and should be literally translated in any passage based on the context in which the word is found. For example, four sentences later in 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul uses the same Greek word *nephaleos* (the adjective of *nepho*) again. This time it is used in reference to wives of Elders and Deacons. It likewise is in a list of qualifications. A logical consideration of the literal definition in relationship to the qualification of Elders would dictate that this word also includes in its meaning abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

The Greek word *nepho* is found twice in 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8. After Paul explains that the Lord will return unexpectedly, as a thief in the night, he writes, “*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation*” (1 Thes. 5:4-8, NKJV). This passage contrasts light with darkness, sleeping with awake as it does sober with drunk. Those in the light are exhorted to watch (vigilantly alert) and be sober (mentally awake). Comparatively, Christians must be sober (physically abstinent) as opposed to drunks who are wasted at night. Here we find the Greek word *nepho* being used both literally and figurative-

ly.

The Greek word *nepho* is used in conjunction with *sophron* in 1 Peter 4:7. *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”* (1 Pet. 4:7, KJV). As noted earlier, *sophron* means to be mentally vigilant where *nepho* means to be physically abstinent. Clearly, Peter is admonishing us to keep our head clear and abstain from wine (alcoholic beverages) for the sake of our prayers. Physical abstinence in prayer doesn't make much sense until it is observed that Peter is concerned about their past life style of *“lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties”* (1 Pet. 4:3), etc. These vices are all associated with the inebriating effects of alcohol. Certainly, we should all go to God in prayer with a clear mind both physically and mentally especially noting the evil times in which we live.

An interesting passage where the Greek word *nepho* is used is in 1 Peter 5:8. Peter actually uses a play on words as he describes Satan's desire to ruin people. Again, the Greek word that is translated “sober” literally means “drink no wine.” The literal Greek translation for the word “devour” means “to drink down.” As Adam Clarke observes, “If you swallow strong drink down, the devil will swallow you down.” In other words, Peter is telling us not to drink alcoholic beverages because Satan is looking for those he may swallow!

Given our understanding of the literal definition of the Greek word *nepho*, we find a discourse in 1 Peter 1:13-19 where we learn the necessity for sobriety. Peter says, *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober [“Do not drink”] ...”* (1 Pet. 1:13). Peter is concerned about conduct in this passage. After he tells them not to drink, he encourages them to be obedient by not conforming to their lusts (1 Pet. 1:14). He says, *“you also be holy in all your conduct”* (1 Pet. 1:15); *“conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear”* (1 Pet. 1:17); *“knowing that you were not redeemed... from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers”* (1 Pet. 1:18). Drinking not only impairs one's ability to conduct himself faithfully to the Lord but it also impairs one's ability to be holy. Drinking alcohol will impair salvation!

The Greek word *nepho* seems appropriate to be figuratively applied in 2 Timothy 4:5. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy by saying, *“But you be watchful [nepho] in all things...”* Of course, being physically sober facilitates mental vigilance which seems to be the concern in this particular passage.

Christians are commanded to be sober (1 Thes. 5:6, 8; 1 Tim. 3:2, 11; Tit. 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). The sobriety for which the Apostles Paul and Peter refer to in their language is abstinence. Christians are forbidden from the drinking of alcohol. Beloved, “drink no wine!”

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Psalm 118 is the middle chapter of the entire Bible?
 - Psalm 117, before Psalm 118 is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
 - Psalm 119, after Psalm 118 is the longest chapter in the Bible?
 - The Bible has 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118?
 - If you add up all the chapters except Psalm 118, you get a total of 1188 chapters.
 - 1188 or Psalm 118 verse 8 is the middle verse of the entire Bible?
 - Should the central verse not have an important message? *“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.”* Psalm 118:8.
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